

THE
R E P O R T
 OF THE
C O M M I T T E E
 OF THE

Lords of his Majesty's most Honourable Privy-Council, in relation to Mr. Wood's Half-Pence and Farthings, &c.

At the Council Chamber at *Whiteball*, the 24th Day of July, 1724.

IN Obedience to your Majesty's Order of Reference, upon the several Resolutions and Addresses of both Houses of Parliament of Ireland, during their late Session, the late Address of your Majesty's Justices, and Privy Council of that Kingdom, and the Petitions of the County and City of *Dublin*, concerning a Patent granted by your Majesty to *William Wood Esq;* for the Coining and Uttering Copper Half-pence and Farthings in the Kingdom of Ireland, to such Persons as would voluntarily accept the same; and upon the Petition of the said *William Wood*, concerning the same Coinage, the Lords of the Committee have taken into their Consideration the said Patent, Addresses, Petitions, and all Matters and Papers relating thereto, and have heard and examined all such Persons, as upon due and sufficient Notice, were desirous and willing to be heard upon the Subject Matter under their Consideration, and have agreed upon the following Report, containing a true State of the whole Matter, as it appeared before them, with their humble Opinion, to be laid before your Majesty for your Royal Consideration and Determination, upon a Matter of such Importance.

The several Addresses to your Majesty from your Subjects of Ireland, contain in general Terms the strongest Representations of the great Apprehensions they were under, from the Importing and Uttering Copper Half-pence and Farthings in Ireland, by Virtue of the Patent granted to Mr. *Wood*, which they conceived would prove highly prejudicial to your Majesty's Revenue, destructive of the Trade and Commerce of the Kingdom, and of dangerous Consequence to the Properties of the Subject. They represent, That the Patent had been obtained in a clandestine and unprecedented Manner, and by Notorious Misrepresentations of the State of Ireland; That if the Terms of the Patent had been complied with, this Coinage would have been of infinite Loss to the Kingdom, but that the Patentee, under Colour of the Powers granted to him, had Imported and endeavoured to Utter great Quantities of different Impressions, and of less Weight, than required by the Patent, and had been guilty of notorious Frauds and Deceit in Coining the said Copper-Money: And they humbly beseech your Majesty, that you would give such Directions, as in your great Wisdom you

should think proper, to prevent the fatal Effects of Uttering any Half-pence or Farthings by Virtue of the said Patent: And the House of Commons of Ireland, in a second Address upon this Subject, Pray, That your Majesty would be pleased to give Directions to the several Officers intrusted in the Receipt of your Majesty's Revenue, That they do not on any Pretence whatever, receive or utter any of the said Copper-Half-pence or Farthings.

In Answer to the Addresses of the Houses of Parliament of Ireland, your Majesty was most Graciously pleased to assure them, 'That if any Abuses had been committed by the Patentee, You would give the necessary Orders for Enquiring into and punishing those Abuses; and that your Majesty would do every thing, *that was in your Power*, for the Satisfaction of your people.'

In pursuance of this your Majesty's most Gracious Declaration, your Majesty was pleased to take this Matter into your Royal Consideration; and that you might be the better Enabled effectually to answer the Expectations of your People of Ireland, your Majesty was pleased by a Letter from Lord Carteret, one of your principal Secretaries of State, Dated March 10, 1723-4, to Signify your pleasure to your Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 'That he should give Directions for sending over such Papers and Witnesses as should be thought proper to support the Objections made against the Patent, and against the Patentee, in the Execution of the powers given him by the Patent.'

Upon the Receipt of these your Majesty's Orders, the Lord Lieutenant, by his Letter of the 20th of March, 1723-4, represented the great Difficulty he found himself under, to comply with these your Majesty's Orders; and by another Letter of the 24th of March 1723-4, 'after consulting the principal Members of both Houses, who were immediately in your Majesty's Service, and of the Privy Council,' acquainted your Majesty, 'That none of them would take upon them to advise, how any material Persons or Papers might be sent over on this Occasion; but they all seem'd apprehensive of the ill Temper *any Mis-carriage*, in a Tryal, upon *Scire Facias* brought against the Patentee, might occasion in both Houses, if the Evidence were not laid as full before a Jury, as it was before them,' and did therefore, a second time, decline sending over any Persons, Papers or Materials whatsoever, to support this Charge brought against your Majesty's Patent and the Patentee.

As this Proceeding seem'd very extraordinary, that in a Matter that had raised so great and universal a Clamour in Ireland, no one Person could be prevailed upon to come over from Ireland, in support of the United Sence of both Houses of Parliament of Ireland; That no Papers, no Materials, no Evidence whatsoever of the Mischiefs arising from this Patent, or of the notorious Frauds and Deceit committed in the Execution of it, could now be had, to give your Majesty Satisfaction herein; your Majesty however, desirous to give your People of Ireland all possible Satisfaction, but sensible that you cannot in any Case proceed against any of the meanest of your Subjects, but according to the known Rules and Maxims of Law and Justice, repeated your Orders to your Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, that by perswasion, and making proper Allowances for their Expences, new Endeavours might be used to procure and send over such Witnesses as should be thought Material to make good the Charge against the Patent.

In Answer to these Orders, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland acquaints your Majesty, by his Letter of the 23d of April to one of your principal Secretaries of State, 'That in Order to obey your Majesty's commands as far as possibly he could, at a Meeting with my Lord Chancellor, the Chief Judges, your Majesty's Attorney and Sollicitor General, he had earnestly desired their Advice and Assistance, to enable him to send over such Witnesses as might be necessary to support the charge against Mr. Wood's Patent, and the Execution of it: The Result of this Meeting was such, that the Lord Lieutenant could not reap the least Advantage or Assistance from it, every one being so guarded with caution, against giving any Advice or Opinion in this Matter of State, apprehending great Danger to themselves from meddling in it.'

The Lords of the Committee think it very strange, that there should be such great Difficulty in prevailing with persons, who had already given their Evidence before the Parliament of Ireland, to come over and give the same Evidence here, and especially, that the chief Difficulty should arise, from a general Apprehension of a Miscarriage, in an Enquiry before your Majesty, or in a proceeding by due Course of Law, in a Case, where both Houses of Parliament had declared themselves so fully convinced, and satisfied upon Evidence, and Examinations taken in the most solemn Manner.

At the same time that your Majesty sent your Orders to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, to send over such Evidences as were thought Material to support the Charge against the Patent, that your Majesty might, without any further Loss of Time that was absolutely necessary, be as fully informed as was possible, and that the Abuses and Frauds alledged to be committed by the Patentee, in executing the powers granted to him, might be fully and strictly enquired into, and examined, your Majesty was pleased to order that an Assay should be made of the Fineness, Value, and Weight of this Copper Money, and the Goodness thereof, compared with the former Coinages of Copper Money for Ireland, and the Copper Money coined in your Majesty's Mint in England; and it was accordingly referred to Sir Isaac Newton, Edward Southwell, and John Scrope, Esqs. to make the said Assay and Tryal.

By the Reports made of this Assay, which are hereunto annexed, it appears, 'That the Pix of the Copper Money coined at Bristol by Mr. Wood for Ireland, containing the Tryal pieces, which was sealed and locked up at the Time of Coining, was opened at your Majesty's Mint at the Tower; that the Comptroller's Account of the Quantities of Half-pence and Farthings coined, agreed with Mr. Wood's Account, amounting to 59 Tons, 3 Hundred, 1 Quarter, 11 pounds, and 4 Ounces; That by the Specimens of this Coinage, which had from time to time been taken from the several parcels coin'd, and sealed up in Papers, and put into the Pix, 60 Half-pence weighed 14 Ounces Troy, and 18 Penny Weight, which is about a quarter of an Ounce above one Pound Weight Averduois; and 30 Farthings weighed 3 Ounces and 3 quarters of an Ounce Troy, and 46 Grains, which is also above the Weight required by the Patent. It also appears, that both Half-pence and Farthings when heated red hot spread thin under the Hammer without cracking; that the

Copper of which Mr. Wood's Coinage is made, is of the same Goodness and Value with the Copper of which the Copper Money is coined in your Majesty's Mint for England, and worth in the Market about 13 Pence per Pound Weight Averduois; That a pound of Copper wrought into Bars or Fillets, and made fit for Coinage, before brought into the Mint at the Tower of London, is worth 18 Pence per Pound, and always cost as much, and is coined into 23 Pence of Copper Money by Tale, for England; It likewise appears, that the Half pence and Farthings coined by Mr. Wood, when compared with the Copper Money coined for Ireland, in the Reigns of King Charles II. King James II. and King William and Queen Mary, considerably exceeds them all in Weight, very far exceeds them all in Goodness, Fineness, and Value of the Copper, none of them bearing the Fire so well, not being maleable, wasting very much in the Fire, and great part of them burning into a Cinder of little or no Value at all; Specimens of all which, as likewise of Mr. Wood's Copper Money, upon Tryals and Assays made by Sir Isaac Newton, Mr. Southwell, and Mr. Scrope, were laid before this Committee for their Information.

The Lords of the Committee beg leave upon this Article of the Complaint, That notorious Frauds and Deceits had been committed by the Patentee, in executing the Powers granted him, to observe to your Majesty, That this is a Fact expressly charged upon the Patentee, and if it had in any Manner been proved, it might have enabled your Majesty, by due Course of Law, to have given the Satisfaction to your People of Ireland, that has been so much insisted upon; but as it is now above four Months since your Majesty was pleased to send over to Ireland for such Evidence, as might prove a Fact alledged to be so notorious, and no Evidence at all has been as yet transmitted, nor the least expectation given of any that may hereafter be obtained, and the Tryals and Assays that have been taken of the Half-pence, and Farthings coined by Mr. Wood proving so unquestionably the Weight, Goodness and Fineness of the Copper Money coined, rather exceeding the conditions of the Patent, then being any way defective, the Lords of the Committee cannot advise your Majesty, by a Writ of Seize Facias, or any other Manner to endeavour vacating the said Patent, when there is no Probability of success in such an Undertaking.

As these Tryals and Assays fully shew that the Patentee hath acted fairly according to the Terms and Conditions of his Patent, so they evidently prove, that the Care and Caution made use of in this Patent, by proper Conditions, Checks, and Comptroles, have effectually provided, that the Copper Money coined for Ireland by virtue of this Patent, should far exceed the like Coinages for Ireland, in the Reigns of your Majesty's Royal Predecessors.

And that your Majesty's Royal Predecessors have exercised this undoubted Prerogative of granting to private Persons the Power and Privilege of coining Coper Half-Pence and Farthings for the Kingdom of Ireland, was proved to this Committee by several Precedents of such Patents granted to private Persons by King Charles II. and King James II. none of which were equally beneficial to your Kingdom of Ireland, nor so well guarded with proper Covenants and Conditions for the due Execution of the Powers thereby granted, altho' the Power and Validity of those Patents, and a due Compliance with them, was never in any one Instance, till this time, disputed or controverted.

By these former Patents, the sole Power of coining Copper Money for Ireland, was granted to the Patentees for the Term of 21 Years, to be coined in such Place as they should think convenient, and such Quantities as they could conveniently issue within the Term of 21 Years, without any Restriction of the Quantity to be coined within the whole Term, or any provision of a certain Quantity, only to be coined annually to prevent the ill Consequences of too great a Quantity to be poured in at once, at the Will and pleasure of the Patentees; no provision was made for the Goodness and Fineness of the Copper, no Comptroler appointed to Inspect the Copper in Bars and Fillets, before coined, and take constant Assays of the Money when coin-



ed, and the power of issuing not limited to such as would voluntarily accept the same; but by the Patent granted to John Knox, the Money coined by Virtue of that Patent, is made and declared to be the current Coin of the Kingdom of Ireland, and a pound Weight of Copper was allowed to be coined into 2 Shillings and 8 Pence, and whatever Quantity should be coined, a Rent of 16 l. per Annum only was reserved to the Crown, and 700 Tons of Copper were computed to be coined within the 21 Years, without any Complaint.

The Term granted to Mr. Wood for coining Copper Money is for 14 Years only, the Quantity for the whole Term limited to 360 Tons, 100 Ton only to be issued within one Year, and 20 Tons each Year for the 13 remaining Years; a Comptroller is appointed by the Authority of the Crown to Inspect, Comptrole, and Assay the Copper, as well not coined as coined; the Copper to be fine British Copper, cast into Bars or Fillets, which when heated red hot would spread thin under the Hammer; a Pound Weight of Copper to be coined into 2 Skillings and Six-pence, and without any Compulsion or Currency inforced, to be receiv'd by such only as would voluntarily and wilfully accept the same; a Rent of 800 l. per Annum is reserved unto your Majesty, and 200 l. per Annum to your Majesty's Clerk Comptroller, to be paid annually by the Patentee, for the full Term of the 14 Years, which for 13 Years when 20 Tons of Copper only are coined, is not inconsiderable; these great and essential Differences in the several Patents, that have been granted for coining Copper Money for the Kingdom of Ireland, seemed sufficiently to justify the care and caution that was used in granting the Letters Patent to Mr. Wood.

It has been further represented to your Majesty, That these Letters Patent were obtain'd by Mr. Wood in a clandestine and unprecedent Manner, and by gross Misrepresentations of the State of the Kingdom of Ireland. Upon enquiring into this Fact it appears, That the Petition of Mr. Wood for obtaining this Coinage, was presented to your Majesty at the Time that several other Petitions and Applications were made to your Majesty, for the same Purpose, by sundry Persons, well acquainted and conversant with the Affairs of Ireland, setting forth the great want of small Money and Change in all the common and lower Parts of Traffick, and Business throughout the Kingdom, and the Terms of Mr. Wood's Petition seeming to your Majesty most reasonable, thereupon a Draught of a Warrant directting a Grant of such Coinage to be made to Mr. Wood, was referr'd to your Majesty's then Attorney and Solicitor General of England, to Consider and Report their Opinion to your Majesty; Sir Isaac Newton, as the Committee is informed was Consulted in all the Steps of settling and adjusting the Terms and Conditions of the Patent; and after mature deliberation, your Majesty's Warrant was sign'd, directring an Indenture in such Manner as is practised in your Majesty's Mint in the Tower of London, for the coining of Gold and Silver Monies, to pass the great Seal of Great Britain, which was carried through all the usual Forms and Offices without Haste or Precipitation, That the Committee cannot discover the least pretence to say, this Patent was pass'd or obtained in a clandestine or unprecedented Manner, unless it is to be understood, that your Majesty's granting a Liberty of Coining Copper Money for Ireland, under the Great Seal of Great Britain, without referring the Consideration thereto to the principal Officers of Ireland, is the Grievance and Michief complained of. Upon this Head it must be admitted, that Letters Patents under the Great Seal of Great Britain for coining Copper Money for Ireland, are Legal and Obligatory, a just and reasonable Exercise of your Majesty's Royal Prerogative, and in no Manner derogatory, or invasive, of any Liberties or Privileges of your Subjects of Ireland. When any Matter or Thing is Transacting that concerns or may Affect your Kingdom of Ireland, if your Majesty has any Doubts concerning the same, or sees just Cause for considering your Offices of Ireland, your Majesty is frequently pleased to refer such Considerations to your chief Governours of

Ireland, but the Lords of the Committee hope it will not be asserted, that any legal Orders or Resolutions of your Majesty can or ought to be called in Question or invalidated, because the Advice or Consent of your chief Governours of that Kingdom was not previously had upon them: The Precedents are many, wherein Cases of great Importance to Ireland, and that immediately affected, the Interests of that Kingdom, Warrants, Orders, and Directions, by the Authority of your Majesty and your Royal Predecessors, have been issued under the Royal Sign Manual, without any previous Reference, or Advice of your Officers of Ireland, which have always had their due Force, and have been punctually complied with and obeyed. And as it cannot be disputed but this Patent might legally and properly pass under the Great Seal of Great Britain, so their Lordships cannot find any Precedents of References to the Officers of Ireland, of what passed under the Great Seal of England; on the contrary, there are Precedents of Patents passed under the Great Seal of Ireland, where in all the previous Steps the References were made to the Officers of England.

By the Misrepresentation of the State of Ireland, in order to obtain this Patent, it is presumed, is meant, That the Information given to your Majesty of the great want of small Money, to make small Payments, was groundless, and that there is no such want of small Money: The Lords of the Committee enquired very particularly into this Article, and Mr. Wood produced several Witnesses, that directly asserted the great want of small Money for Change, and the great Damage that Retailers and Manufactures suffered for want of such Copper Money. Evidence was given, That considerable Manufactures have been obliged to give Tallies, or Tokens in Cards, to their Workmen for want of small Money, signed upon the Back, to be afterwards exchanged for larger Money: That a Premium was often given to obtain small Money for necessary Occasions: Several Letters from Ireland to Correspondents in England were read, complaining of the want of Copper Money, and expressing the great Demand there was for this Money.

The great want of small Money was further proved by the common Use of Raps, a counterfeit Coin, of such base Metal, that what passes for a Half-Penny, is not worth half a Farthing, which Raps appeared to have obtained a Currency, out of Necessity and for want of better small Money to make Change with, and by the best Accounts, the Lords of the Committee have Reason to believe, That there can be no doubt, that there is a real want of small Money in Ireland, which seems to be so far admitted on all Hands, that there does not appear to have been any Misrepresentation of the State of Ireland in this Respect.

In the second Address from the House of Commons to your Majesty, They most humbly beseech your Majesty, that you will be graciously pleased to give Directions to the several Officers intrusted with the Receipt of your Majesty's Revenue, that they do not, on any pretence whatsoever, receive or utter such Half-Pence or Farthings, and Mr. Wood, in his Petition to your Majesty, Complains, that the Officers of your Majesty's Revenue had already given such Orders to all the inferior Officers not to receive any of this Coin.

Your Majesty, by your Patent under the Great Seal of Great Britain, Wills, Requires and Commands your Lieutenant, Deputy, or other Chief Governor or Governors of your Kingdom of Ireland, and all other Officers and Ministers of your Majesty, your Heirs and Successors in England, Ireland or elsewhere, to be aiding and assisting to the said William Wood, his Executors, &c. in the Execution of all or any the Powers, Authorities, Directions, Matters or Things to be executed by him or them, or for his or their Benefit and Advantage, by Virtue, and in Pursuance of the said Indentures, in all Things as becometh, &c. And if the Officers of the Revenue have, upon their own Authority, given any Orders, Directions, Significations,

one, or Intimations, to hinder or obstruct the receiving and uttering the Copper Money coined and imported, pursuant to your Majesty's Letters Patent, this cannot but be looked upon as a very extraordinary Proceeding.

In another Paragraph of the Patent your Majesty has covenanted and granted unto the said William Wood, his Executors, &c. ' That upon performance of Covenants, on his and their Parts, he and they shall peaceably, and quietly, have, hold, and enjoy all the Powers, Authorities, Privileges, Licences, Profits, Advantages, and all other Matters and Things thereby granted, without any Lett, Suit, Trouble, Molestation or Denial of your Majesty, your Heirs or Successors, or of, or by any of your or their Officers or Ministers, or any Person or Persons. &c. This being so expressly granted and covenanted by your Majesty, and there appearing no Failure, Non-Performance, or Breach of Covenants, on the Part of the Patentee, the Lords of the Committee cannot advise your Majesty to give Directions to the Officers of the Revenue, not to receive or utter any of the said Copper Half-Pence or Farthings as has been desired.

Mr. Wood having been heard by his Council, produced his several Witnesses, all the Papers and Precedents, which he thought Material, having been read and considered, and having as he conceived, fully vindicated both the Patent, and the Execution thereof. For his further Justification, and to clear himself from the Imputation of attempting to make to himself any unreasonable Profit or Advantage, and to enrich himself at the Expence of the Kingdom of Ireland, by endeavouring to impose upon them, and utter a greater Quantity of Copper Money, than the necessary Occasions of the People shall require, and can easily take off, delivered a Proposal in Writing, signed by himself, which is hereunto annexed, and Mr. Wood having by the said Letters Patent, ' covenanted, granted, and promised to, and with your Majesty, your Heirs and Successors, that he shall and will from time to time in the making the said Copper Farthings and Half-pence in England, and in transporting the same from time to time to Ireland, and in uttering, vending, disposing and dispersing the same there, and in all his Doings and Accounts concerning the same, submit himself to the Inspection, Examination, or-

der and Comptrol of your Majesty and your Commissioners of the Treasury or High Treasurer for the time being; the Lords of the Committee are of Opinion, that your Majesty upon this Voluntary Offer and Proposal of Mr. Wood, may give proper Orders and Directions for the Execution and due Performance of such Parts of the said Proposal, as shall be judged most for the Interest and Accommodation of your Subjects of Ireland: In the mean time, it not appearing to their Lordships that Mr. Wood has done or committed any Act or Deed, that may tend to invalidate, or make void his Letters Patent, or to forfeit the Privileges and Advantages thereby granted to him by your Majesty; It is but just and reasonable, that your Majesty should immediately send Orders to your Commissioners of the Revenue, and all other your Officers in Ireland, to revoke all Orders, Directions, Significations, or Intimations whatsoever, that may have been given by them, or any of them, to hinder or obstruct the receiving and uttering this Copper Money, and that the Half-Pence and Farthings already coined by Mr. Wood, amounting to about 17000 l. and such further Quantity as shall make up the said 17000 l. to 40000 l. be suffered and permitted without any Lett, Suit, Trouble, Molestation, or Denial of any of your Majesty's Officers or Ministers whatsoever, to Pass, and be received as Current Money by such as shall be willing to receive the same. At the same time, it may be adviseable for your Majesty, to give the proper Orders, that Mr. Wood shall not Coin, Import into Ireland, utter or dispose of any more Copper Half-Pence or Farthings, than to the amount of 40000 l. according to his own Proposal, without your Majesty's special Licence or Authority, to be had for that Purpose; and if your Majesty shall be pleased to Order, that Mr. Wood's Proposal, delivered to the Lords of the Committee, shall be transmitted to your Majesty's Chief Governour, Deputies, or other your Ministers, or Officers in Ireland, it will give them a proper Opportunity to consider, Whether, after the Reduction of 360 Tons of Copper, being in Value 100800 l. to 142 Tons, 17 Hundred, 16 Pounds being in Value 40,000 l. only, any thing can be done for the further Satisfaction of the People of Ireland.



